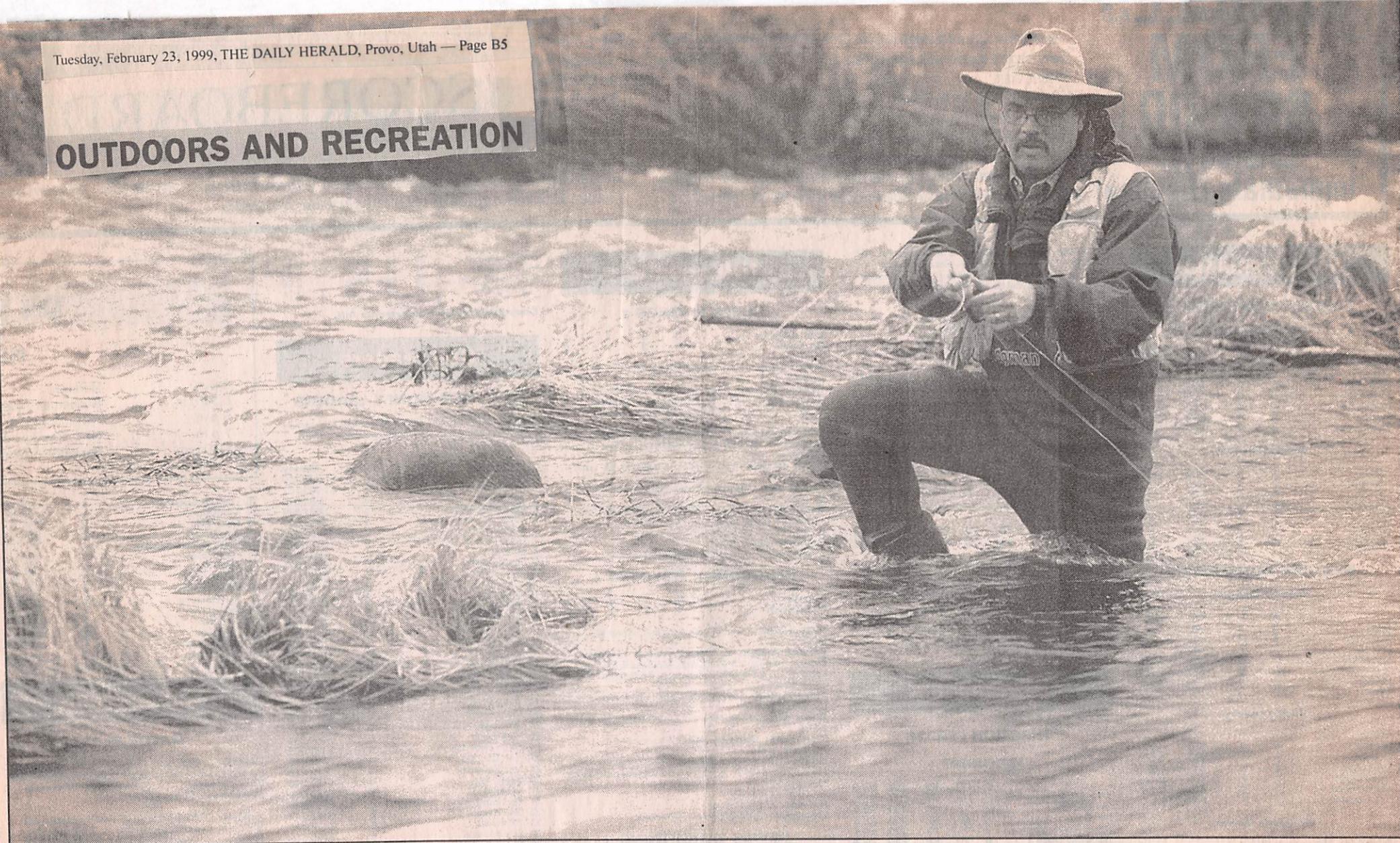


OUTDOORS AND RECREATION



JASON OLSON/The Daily Herald

**Better fishing:** Michael Rutter tries his luck fishing along a stretch of the Provo River near the Riverwoods shopping center in January. Rutter was testing a new rod for a magazine article. Fishing on the Provo should improve because of government intervention.

# The fall and rise of the Provo River

It was not exactly a scientific survey. Several men sitting around Cooper's Tires in Heber City voiced their opinions as I waited to have my fishing boot patched.

(There aren't many places anymore where a man or woman can have a fishing boot patched. When it comes to patching, most garages today fool around only with radial tires.)

My survey question: How do Heber Valley citizens feel about the government coming in and (1) taking over the Provo River between Deer Creek/Jordanelle reservoirs to provide better fishing for Wasatch Front anglers and (2) buying out local landowners to provide access for those fishermen?

As I said, it was not exactly a scientific survey. But half (two) said they didn't like it; half (two) did. One man held his opinion in abeyance.

Those who liked the move said they had been paid a fair market price by the government (formal name: Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission), that returning water to the river and providing a new trout fisher would bring in tourist money.

Those opposed said farmers in the area wouldn't benefit from tourism money at all.

The pro's countered by saying there weren't that many farms left in Heber Valley anyway.

One old man, wearing bib overalls, said that farm-

## OUTDOOR SPORTS



HARTT WIXOM

ers constituted the "quality" pioneer stock remaining in the valley. The latter cited more government interference, loss of valuable/private streamside property, plus such matters as mushrooming cost of litter control, criminal activity, outsiders taking over etc.

"But that's what all the tourist money pays for," said the first.

**BY THEN**, Cooper had my boot patched and I returned to fishing the upper Provo River. But as I thought about it, I couldn't help being biased for the pro side.

Fifty years ago, I watched the Provo River being dewatered into what seemed endless irrigation canals. What was left was gouged and gutted in the name of flood control. Fishermen not only found the trout gone from Deer Creek to Woodland, but the aesthetics as well.

Moss beds, insect life, most biota on which trout feed, for that matter, had been stripped

by heavy machinery from the stream bottom to decay on dikes.

That's where the mitigation committee comes in. As part of funding the Central Utah Project and building Jordanelle Dam, it was mandated that some \$24 million be spent to rehabilitate eight miles of river below.

That includes placing boulders, logs and barriers to slow current and provide more trout habitat, and replacing natural meanders in the river where it was straightened to get water down faster.

**IT IS** for me, remembering how I nearly wept at the destruction of a favorite trout stream in the 1950s, little short of a modern ecological

miracle.

Man-made, at that. But then it was man who screwed it up in the first place.

At the same time, there are some things that aren't broken and don't need fixing. In the section above the Midway-to-Kamas bridge, which was never totally dewatered, some sizable brown trout have become re-established. It is assumed that when rehabilitating the river, focus will be on healing what's hurting rather than what's healthy.

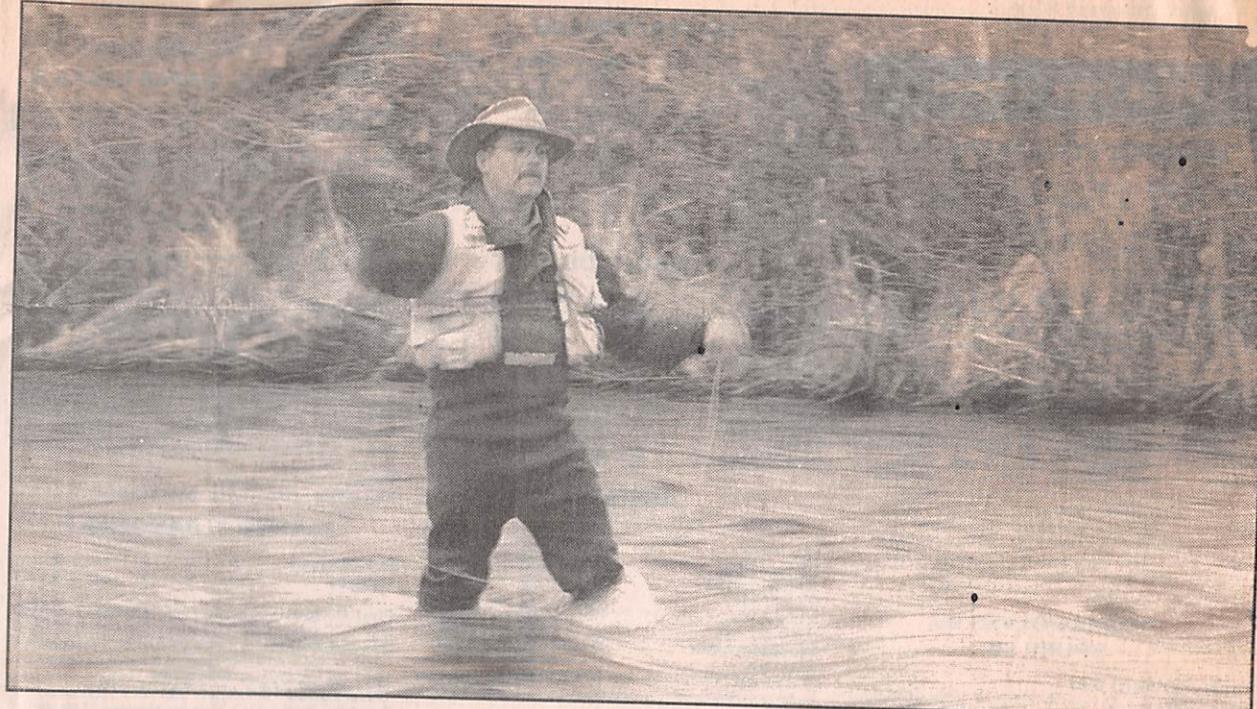
After talking to the people in charge of bringing the upper river back to its former blue-ribbon glory, I believe they have the articulate, sensitive mind-set to accomplish just that.

Charles Thompson, fish-

eries biologist at the Division of Wildlife Resources, said Jordanelle Reservoir was built with modern technology, releasing clean, cold water from Jordanelle (which Deer Creek doesn't all year) in the 50- to 65-degree range. Minimum flow guarantees benefiting fisheries are already in place.

Much of the CUP money has already been spent buying right-of-way along the river, although it must yet be established who will be given authority to regulate and police it. Such an entity needs annual funding.

One thing for sure. It isn't every day that the environment wins. This would seem to be the case on the Provo River in Heber Valley.



**Provo Canyon Scenic  
Byway Open House**

7-12-00  
Mountainland Association  
of Governments (MAG) is  
hosting an open house style  
public workshop to discuss  
the Draft Corridor and  
Watershed Management Plan  
for the Provo Canyon Scenic  
Byway (U.S.-189, from Orem  
City to Heber City).

The purpose of this second  
of two planned public work-  
shops is to receive public  
input on the content of the  
Draft Plan. Information in the  
plan includes: One, the pro-  
posed Corridor Management  
Plan; Two, the proposed

